

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md., 5th) had some advice for the young professionals of St. Mary's County – make some noise.

Hoyer stopped Friday at the J.T. Daugherty Center in Lexington Park for a lunch with the Young Professionals Initiative of St. Mary's County after attending the dedication of the Aircraft Prototype Facility at Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

"I'm Steny Hoyer; I used to be young," Hoyer, 70, said, introducing himself.

Hoyer took questions from the club's members, who stated that young families are not well represented in St. Mary's comprehensive growth plan and complained of high housing prices, rent gouging and few housing and entertainment choices.

After hearing a few of the complaints, Bob Schaller, director of economic development and community for the county, suggested that the group needed to be more vocal about their concerns.

"You guys have to have a stronger voice," Schaller said. "You have to be assertive."

Hoyer agreed, saying, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Hoyer noted that group's concerns about lack of choice and high costs of housing were not federal-level issues, but local issues that should be addressed to the county commissioners. He noted that the market is slowly readjusting, squeezing bubble price inflation out of the housing and rental markets.

"It's adjusting," Hoyer said. "It's continuing to adjust. ...In the long term, the market is correcting itself."

However, Hoyer said that the YPI needed to push its agenda with the local government. "What I'm hearing today is that all of you need to do a lot of work with the commissioners," Hoyer said.

Hoyer noted that in an age of e-mail and text messaging, "personal interface still matters."

He also said that the YPI members needed to be prepared to do the job themselves if they want to see progress.

"Who wants to run for county commissioner?" Hoyer asked. One person tentatively raised his hand and then lowered it. "Hear me, not one of you raised your hand."

Hoyer noted that he won for his first seat in the state senate at the age of 27. He encouraged the group to follow his lead. "If you have a problem, you can testify, but, if they don't move, run for county commissioner," Hoyer said.